2:Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1951
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

wife's family in view of the fact that the man who has married their daughter has joined their community and is bringing up his children as members of it. They may even give him some of their own cattle to help him build up a herd. The second fact to be taken into consideration is the Nuer custom, for various reasons not always observed, by which the eldest child of a marriage is brought up by his, or her, maternal grandparents. A child brought up in his maternal kinsmen's village naturally feels that in some respects it, and not his paternal kinsmen's village, is his home.

Cattle are a powerful element, often the deciding consideration, especially in the minds of unadopted Dinka captives or immigrants, in a man's choice of residence. A Nuer cannot live for long without cattle, and he who possesses none must attach himself to the byre and herd of some kinsman. Men with only a few beasts also sometimes find it a convenience to tether them in the byre of a kinsman rather than build a byre of their own. One often finds that the reason a man decides to live with one of his maternal kin, with a paternal aunt, with one of his affinal kin, or with the family of a widow-concubine, is that he knows that the person he intends to reside with will allow him to be a member of the household, will give shelter to his animals if he has any, and will help him to start a herd if he lacks cattle entirely; whereas his paternal kinsmen are unable or unwilling to do so, or, in the case of many Dinka, are altogether absent.

As a further conclusion, I remark again that the drawing together by, and into, the lineage system of the many different strands of kinship (and affinity) which compose the network of social ties in each local community gives the community its unitary character and fixes its position in tribal structure. The points at which they are drawn together are the 'bulls' of the kinship clusters, and especially the tribal 'bulls', those men who are persons not only of age, wealth, and character, but also members of the dominant clan of the tribe—tribal aristocrats. These tribal 'bulls' are the centres of clusters of kin, but they are also agnates, and each has in relation to the others a structural position in the lineage system of the dominant clan. Through them, therefore, all the tribesmen are attached to the dominant clan of the tribe and all the local communities are assimilated to the highly consistent structure of its segments, in which they are conceptualized. It is

2:Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1951
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to the peculiar position in each elementary family of the eldest child.* The eldest child of either sex is known as *gat ma keagh* and the mother may address him (or her) as *keaghda*, my first-born. This child must never use the spoon of his father or mother, and I have sometimes been given to understand that this is one of the reasons for the bringing up of an eldest child by his maternal grandparents, it being felt better to keep him away from his parents' home till he is of an age to observe the prohibition. He must also avoid sleeping or sitting on his mother's sleeping-hide, for this may make her barren and may also injure the father, the child himself, and the cattle. I believe also that if the eldest child is a girl she may not use the horns of female animals for any purpose. When an eldest male child is initiated an extra incision is made, at any rate in some parts of Nuerland, on his forehead—seven instead of the usual six—and an ox must be sacrificed at the ceremony, whereas a goat or sheep may be considered sufficient for a younger son. Parents, especially the mother, and maternal uncles are said to fear the curse of an eldest child.

These customs relating to the eldest child are an indication of his special position in the family and kinship system. He is born in his mother's home and ought to be brought up there if his maternal grandmother is alive. If she is dead the child will probably be brought up by his parents till he is about six years of age, and then go to his maternal uncle till puberty. The eldest child is the keystone of the marriage. Till he is born the marriage is not regarded as complete. He is also the link through which the kin of the father and the kin of the mother are brought into relations of kinship with one another, for the child is the child of the mother's people as well as the child of the father's people. It is true that he belongs to his father's lineage, because he is the child of their cattle, but the sentimental claim of his mother's people to their daughter's child is recognized in their right to bring the child up in their home.

Indeed it must be acknowledged that in Nuer family life there is always a pull on the children in both directions: a pull of legal and religious norms and of the whole pattern of the politico-social

* The youngest child, the *pek*, also has a special position in the family, an indication of which in a male child is in some tribes the cutting of an extra line on his forehead at initiation, as in the case of an eldest male child. I am not certain, however, how socially significant is his position.

4: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1948 FJ22 Nuer FJ22

593 591 from the first millet of the year—a pretty custom known as *puthene kuon*, honouring with porridge.

All are equally anxious for a child to be born, the husband and wife because they want a son and the wife's parents and kin because they cannot, without risking 842 complications, dispose of the cattle of the marriage till a first-born completes the union. Those whose daughters they might wish to marry would not be happy about accepting such cattle as bridewealth in case they had suddenly to be returned to the husband. 591 When a child is born the mother remains with her parents till she has weaned it. This is a suitable regulation, because after the bridewealth has been paid the husband's father is likely to be short of lactating cows, while the wife's parents will have plenty of milk from their herd. If, for some reason, the wife goes to live with her husband 862 before the child is weaned, it may not be weaned without the consent of her parents, and I have seen a husband pay several cattle to atone for contravention of this rule. 602 A *kur*, first child, belongs to the home of his maternal grandparents and if he is 603 weaned in his father's home he returns to live with them, a boy till he is initiated and a girl till she is betrothed. This is the rule, though there is variation in practice, 858 depending on the ability of the maternal grandparents to support the child and on the relations between them and their son-in-law.

852 Shortly after the birth of her first-born the wife, now called *pai dap*, a nursing mother, brings the baby to her husband's home and lays him in the ashes of the hearth 591 in the centre of his grandfather's byre, a rite known as *nong puka*, the bringing to the ashes. Beer has been prepared and is drunk by a few senior kinsmen of the husband [273] who live in his hamlet. It is a domestic, and not a public, ceremony. The wife spends a few days in her husband's home and returns with the child to the village of her parents. She has as yet no hut of her own in her husband's homestead.

591 When his first-born has been weaned the husband builds his wife a hut in his father's homestead facing the family kraal. He then goes to ask his parents-in-law for his 585 wife. They do not deny him, even if, as is likely, some of the bridewealth cattle are still owing. They give her a horn spoon and a gourd and she takes these with her to her husband's home. The gift of a spoon is emphasized by the Nuer in speaking of marriage, because it is a recognition that the woman is now, in the full sense, a wife, who will eat of the porridge of her own gardens with the milk of her own herd. She now milks her husband's cows instead of her father's and hoes the gardens of his home and not those of her childhood. Before she is given a spoon, even if she hoes a garden at her husband's home she takes the harvest back to her father, or she may live at her husband's home and cultivate in her father's village, if it is not far. It is only when a man's bride has borne him a child and tends his hearth that she becomes, in the Nuer sense, his wife. She then makes a *buor*, a mud fire-screen, and the spirit of his lineage comes to dwell there. Later his father tells him to build a byre and gives him a few cows to start a herd.

The marriage has thus reached completion through many stages: betrothal ceremony, wedding ceremony, consummation ceremony, the birth of a child, the bringing of the first-born to his father's byre, and the presentation to the wife of a [606] spoon as a sign of her domestic separation from her family. She comes to her husband's home not as a wife but as a mother whose breasts have suckled a child of their lineage.

14: Huffman M-5 (no date) 1931
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

582 in turn helps the brother just younger than he, and so on until all are supplied with the wherewithal to get married.

The oldest daughter in a family is likewise given in marriage before her younger sisters.

Should a man have children by two wives, if one wife dies, her son—even though he may be younger than the sons of the other wife—may be allowed and helped to get married before they do, the object being to supply him with a housekeeper as speedily as possible. His half-brothers are not supposed to be in as urgent need since they have their mother to cook for them.

593 After a wife goes to live with her husband permanently,
837 if he suspects that she is paying attention to any other man, he will probably beat her; or he may beat her for any other reason if he so desires. He finds his spiked bracelet specially useful at these times.

594 The greatest desire of a Nuer woman is for children. She realizes that as long as she can bear her husband children he will care for her. Should she fail him in this her position is insecure, and he, no doubt, will try to get another wife who will be able to give him his heart's desire. The mother also realizes that her children will care for
[595] her in her old age, even if her husband does take younger wives, so her children make her position in old age secure.

● 603 The oldest daughter (when several years of age) goes to live with her grandmother on her mother's side, providing her mother is the oldest daughter of her grandmother, or possibly this child may be the first grand-daughter. So the grandmother is assured of help in her old age.

CHILDBIRTH AND AFTER

843 One frequently wonders how babies do manage to live in Nuerland, when one considers how little care the mother receives at the time of their birth.

cattle has been handed over.(1) A marriage which has reached the final rites may be regarded as a stable union. 584

The first step occurs when a youth reaches an understanding with a girl and, having some of the necessary cattle, asks her consent to marriage. Both families are consulted and arrangements are made for the betrothal *(larcieng)*.

When a definite agreement has been reached about bridewealth cattle, the wedding ceremony *(ngut)* is held at the bride's homestead. The main features of a wedding are: discussions about cattle, which are held in the morning; the invocation over the cattle of the bridewealth, followed by the wedding dance and the wedding sacrifice in the afternoon and evening. Though this ceremony does not conclude the marriage there is every chance, once this point is reached, that the union will be completed. 585

The third of the public ceremonies is the one which, at least among the Eastern Nuer, makes the union legally binding. This is the *nut* (consummation). After it the husband can claim compensation for adultery and the cattle are regarded as marriage cattle and not as a pledge.

Marriage is completed by the birth of a child. Until then the wife sleeps in a hut at her parents' homestead and she remains with her parents until the child is weaned. The first-born child belongs to the home of his maternal grandparents and even if he is weaned in his father's home he returns to live with them. A boy stays with his maternal grandparents until he is initiated, a girl until she is betrothed. The baby is always brought to the father's home for the ceremony of laying him on the ashes of the hearth in the centre of his grandfather's byre, which takes place shortly after birth. 591 603 852

After the weaning, the husband builds his wife a hut in his father's homestead. She goes to live with him as a true wife in that she will now milk his cows and hoe his gardens and not those of her father. She makes a *buor*, a mud fire screen, and the spirit of his lineage comes to dwell there. Later his father tells him to build a byre and gives him a few cows to start a herd.(2) 591

In-Law Relationships

In-law relationships are marked by certain avoidances and displays of respect. Until his first child is born a husband does not openly visit his parents-in-law's village except in some formal capacity. After the birth he makes public visits, but he treats his parents-in-law with great respect and must not eat with them or appear naked before them. When two of three children have been born, a ceremony takes place after which he no longer has to observe these rules and prohibitions. When the father-in-law visits the husband's home and is entertained and given a bull, calf or sheep, his son-in-law may regard him as a father. The only in-law whom a man need not treat with formal respect is his wife's sister. 606 607

(1) Evans-Pritchard, *Africa*, XVIII, 1948, p.29.
(2) Evans-Pritchard, *Africa*, XVIII, 1948, p.40.

16: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1956
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

789 593 A mother may curse her son for neglect, especially when she is old and must rely on others for support, or for divulging her hiding-place to her husband if he is angry with her and seeks for her to chastise her. A mother's curse may have the same effects as a father's curse; but it is thought that, in addition, it has the particular effect of preventing the son from begetting male children. A mother's curse may thus injure the lineage, and in this respect her curse is more like that of the mother's brother than that of the father. I have also been told that a mother may, because she loves a son who has wandered to a distant country, curse him mildly so that he may suffer some minor sickness which will put him in memory of his home and cause him to return to it.

789 604 The curse of a mother's brother—at any rate that of a mother's uterine brother—is also greatly feared by Nuer, for he, unlike the father, may curse a man 'to cattle', so that he loses his entire herd. Nuer seem to regard it as the worst of all curses and they recognize it as a strong sanction behind the demands of their mothers' brothers, where these are just. A sister's son who fails to carry out [753] certain duties or who fails to observe certain interdictions concerning his mother's brother may develop a disease called *keth nara* (disease of the *nar*, mother's brother), which may be fatal. Nuer describe it as '*cere ke biit*', 'like to a curse'. People say that [603] the curses of father, mother, and mother's brother are the worst, though that of a paternal grandmother is also said to be bad, and [593] it is said that the curse of an eldest child is feared by his parents, especially his mother, and by his maternal uncle; in certain circumstances a sister's son, especially the eldest son of the sister, may curse his maternal uncle's herd. The only other kinsfolk of whom I have been specifically told that they may curse a man, in the sense that one may speak of a curse of the kinship category in which they stand, are the father's sister and the mother's sister, and Nuer say that these are very small curses and they do not therefore give them much thought; but a person standing in any social relationship to another may curse him if he has been wronged by him. However, the more distant the relationship the less effective the curse, because the less the obligation and therefore the less the wrong.

789 593 A run of misfortunes may be attributed to the curse of one of these relatives. I tell one story in illustration. Luak, a man of the Leek tribe, refused to stay at home and help his father Thicjok to